SF CHRONICLE-9/24/93

Secret Papers On JFK Slaying Made Public

CIA, FBI document focus on Oswald's travel abroad

By Robert L. Jackson
Los Angeles Times

Washington

Scores of researchers, reporters and assassination theorists descended on the National Archives yesterday to begin poring over 500,000 pages of newly released documents on the death of President John F. Kennedy.

The files, organized in gray cardboard boxes, held long-secret CIA cables and memos about Lee Harvey Oswald, as well as most records of the Warren Commission's investigation of the crime, the records of the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1979 and those of the 1975 Rockefeller Commission study of CIA domestic activities.

> *'The American people can have direct access to the records and make up their own minds'*
>
> —G. ROBERT BLAKEY, NOTRE DAME LAW PROFESSOR

Release of the heavily censored records was mandated by Congress last year. The documents show, among other things, frantic activity by officials of the CIA and the FBI to learn about Oswald's foreign travels and possible involvement in the assassination by foreign powers. There are cables concerning Oswald's Cuban and Russian contacts, some details of which have been previously revealed, and a memo in which a Soviet defector working for the CIA speculates that the murder was ar-

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ranged by the Soviet secret police.

But, in the view of one expert on the assassination, "there is nothing earth-shattering here."

After perusing the files, G. Robert Blakey, a Notre Dame law professor who has written extensively about the assassination, said, "People who think the assassination resulted from a conspiracy will find confirmation of their theory and those who don't think so will also find support for their beliefs."

The Warren Commission concluded in 1964 that Oswald acted alone when he shot Kennedy as the president's motorcade moved along a Dallas street on Nov. 22, 1963. But the House assassination panel concluded in 1979 there was evidence of more than one gunman and speculated that the Mafia might have been involved in the slaying.

Blakey, who served as chief counsel of the House Assassinations Committee, told reporters that "the real significance of this release is that the American people can have direct access to the records and can make up their own minds."

He said many of the records provide "interesting details of the story, interesting footnotes."

Opening of the records was ordered by Congress under provisions of the JFK Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, which required that all relevant documents in the government's possession be sent to the National Archives to be made public by yesterday.

Movie Played a Role

The action by Congress followed a rekindling of public controversy occasioned by Oliver Stone's 1992 film, "JFK," which suggested Kennedy was the victim of a government conspiracy involving the CIA and the Defense Department, among others.

Blakey and another authority, James H. Lesar, a Washington attorney who heads the nonprofit Assassination Archives and Research Center, had called for the release of 160,000 additional pages of CIA material, but the agency has denied that request, primarily, it said, to protect its intelligence sources and methods.

Among the records released [illegible] CIA cables

1963, said, "Request (name blanked out) be queried as to his knowledge of Lee Oswald contacts with Cuban and Soviet embassies."

Another cable that same day read: "Please ask Mexican immigration to check all their records since June 1962, when Oswald returned from the Soviet Union, to see if he entered or left Mexico at any other time than the 26 September to 3 October 1963 period. We still do not know what if anything Oswald told his Dallas interrogators about travel to Mexico."

In a memo two days later, Peter Deryabin, a former Soviet KGB official who defected to the CIA, wrote to his new bosses that the Soviet secret police may have instigated the slaying to relieve internal pressures on then-Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev.

Khrushchev Angle

"Our president's death ... effectively diverts the Soviets' attention from their internal problems (and) directly affects Khrushchev's longevity," said the memo, which officials later characterized as speculation on Deryabin's part.

Another document reported that Oswald had a sexual relationship with a woman in Mexico whom the CIA apparently had considered for possible recruitment. She was a Mexican citizen working for the Cuban Consulate.

The significance of this document was not clear, although Lesar told reporters that "it raises a new level of uncertainty as to what was really going on" during Oswald's visit to Mexico City prior to the assassination.

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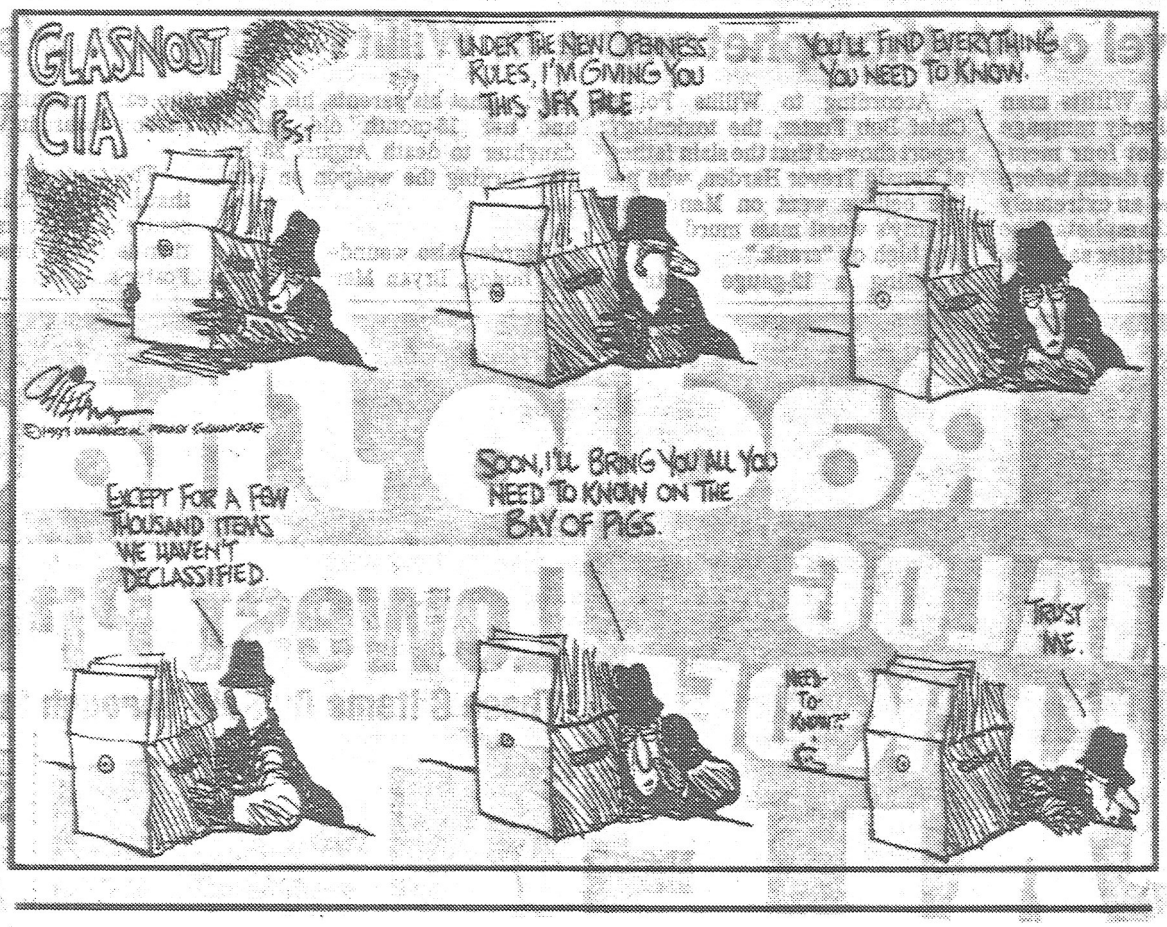
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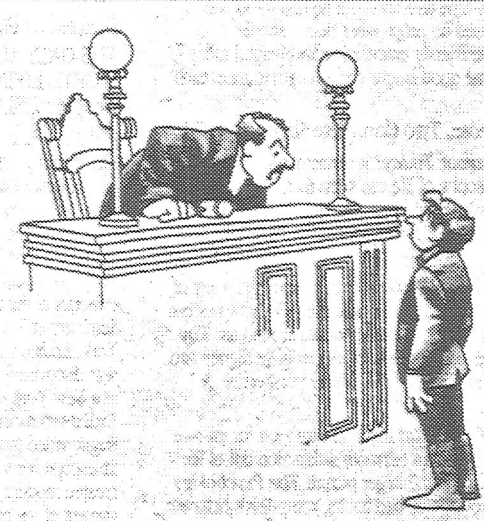

"The Freedom of Information Act?...Who told you about *that*?"